

health plan products by virtue of their commitment to clinical excellence, customer service and continuous improvement."

Mr. Speaker, Touchpoint has worked hard to earn this mark of distinction, and I'm proud to honor them here today.

RECOGNIZING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF LATINAS

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2002

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, as we begin to celebrate Hispanic Heritage month, I rise today to honor the accomplishments of Latinas across our nation and highlight their contributions.

Today there are over sixteen million Hispanic women living in the United States. Latinas have been contributing members of our society since its inception. We are writers, scientists, community organizers, and business leaders. Latinas have made inroads in all facets of society and today I stand, as a Latina Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, to honor the often overlooked achievements of this population.

We are recipients of the MacArthur "Genius" Award—like writer and poet Sandra Cisneros, and immigration advocate Cecilia Munoz;

We are recipients of NASA's Exceptional Service Medal—like astronaut and scientist Ellen Ochoa;

We are part of the National Women's Hall of Fame—like the co-founder of the United Farm Workers Union, Dolores Huerta, and Antonia Novello, the first female and first Hispanic Surgeon General of the United States.

In the face of societal obstacles like unequal pay, educational disadvantages, unmet health care needs, and civil rights struggles, Latinas have already accomplished so much. Yet we know we can do much more. During Hispanic Heritage Month we celebrate our success, but we must be more aware of helping, Latinas maximize their great potential all year-round.

Recuerda que el éxito se alcanza convirtiendo cada paso en una meta y cada meta en un paso. Hoy es el día de realizar nuestros sueños. (Remember that success is achieved by taking each step as a goal and each goal as a step. Today is the day to realize our dreams.)

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS ACT OF 2002

SPEECH OF

HON. STEVE BUYER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 17, 2002

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 3253, as amended, which reflects the House-Senate compromise that was reached. This legislation was originally introduced by Chairman Chris Smith to establish at least four medical emergency preparedness centers at designated VA medical centers. As a cosponsor of this legislation, I want to thank

Chairman Smith for his leadership in moving this important legislation towards final passage.

I also want to thank Chairman Smith, members, and staff in both chambers for preserving H.R. 3254, the Medical Education for National Defense (MEND) for the 21st Century in the final package. That language is incorporated in Section 3 of H.R. 3253, as amended, and is entitled: Education and Training Programs on Medical Responses to Consequences of Terrorist Activities.

Section 3 of H.R. 3253, as amended, would establish an education program to be carried out through the Department of Veterans Affairs. The education and training curriculum developed under the program shall be modeled upon the F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine of the Department of Defense's Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences (USUHS) core curriculum, which includes a program to teach its students how to diagnose and treat casualties that have been exposed to chemical, biological, or radiological agents.

As a Nation, we must be prepared for the new face of terror that we have been forced to confront in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks. What has become all too clear is that our health care providers are not resourced or trained with the proper tools to diagnose and treat casualties in the face of biological, radiological, and chemical weapons.

It is imperative that such a program be disseminated to the Nation's medical professionals and current medical students. This section of the bill takes advantage of the nexus that already exists between the medical education community and the VA. Currently, 107 medical universities are affiliated with a VA medical center. This nexus is already in place and that is what we plan to exploit.

The VA's extensive infrastructure of 163 medical centers, 800 clinics, and satellite broadcast capabilities, will enable the current and future medical professionals in this country to become knowledgeable and medically competent in the treatment of casualties that we all hope will never materialize.

We cannot afford to assume that our country will never again experience a biological, chemical, or radiological attack on the American people. We must, as elected Representatives, act to ensure that if the worst of our fears are realized that the country's medical professionals will be ready and able to deal with these situations.

It is not the intent of this legislation to create new community standards of practice. We must recognize that diseases such as smallpox, botulism, and the plague are not normally treated or recognized in this country. It is extremely important that all of our health care professionals are familiar with and able to diagnose and treat suspected exposure to weapons of mass destruction.

The American Medical Association endorsed H.R. 3254, and the American Association of Medical Colleges has thrown its full support behind this plan. These two organizations know how vital it is to receive this important educational curriculum that addresses the medical aspects of biological chemical and radiological attacks, and they have recognized that the VA is in a unique position to assist with the dissemination of this information to the Nation's medical community.

It is often said that knowledge is power, and in this instance nothing could be more accu-

rate. The knowledge that would result from the implementation of this act is critical. Our medical professionals need to be offered training methods that would enable them to save lives . . . and I can think of no greater power than that.

Please, join with me and support final passage of this important piece of legislation.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES RESEARCH ACT (H.R. 5395)

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 18, 2002

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce today a bill that is critical to solving the economic and environmental problems posed by aquatic invasive species—the Aquatic Invasive Species Research Act. This Act authorizes funding to conduct research to support our efforts to detect, prevent and eradicate invasive species. It complements a bill being introduced today by Mr. GILCHREST in the House and Mr. LEVIN in the Senate to reauthorize the National Invasive Species Act. Many people may wonder what an invasive species is and why it is so crucial to keep them out of U.S. waters and so I will start off with some background.

The introduction of non-native invasive species is not new to United States. People have brought non-native plants and animals into the United States, both intentionally and unintentionally, for a variety of reasons since the New World was discovered. Some examples include the introduction of nutria (which is a rodent similar to a muskrat) by trappers to bolster the domestic fur industry, and the introduction of the purple loosestrife plant to add rich color to gardens. Both nutria and purple loosestrife are now serious threats to wetlands. Non-native species may also be introduced unintentionally, such as through species hitching rides in ships, crates, planes, or soil coming into the United States—zebra mussels, for example, came into the Great Lakes through ballast water from ships.

Not all species brought into the country are harmful to local economies, people, and/or the environment. In fact, most non-native species do not survive because the environment does not meet their biological needs. In many cases, however, the new species will find favorable conditions (such as a lack of natural enemies or an environment that fosters propagation) that allow it to survive and thrive in a new ecosystem. Only a small fraction of these non-native species become an "invasive species"—defined as a species that is both non-native to the ecosystem under consideration, and whose introduction causes or may cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. However, this small fraction can cause enormous damage—both economic and environmental.

Aquatic invasive species can be very costly to our economy. Estimating the total economic impact of harmful non-native species is extremely difficult. No single organization accumulates such statistics comprehensively. However, researchers at Cornell University estimate that invasive species cost Americans \$137 billion annually. This includes the cost of